

Honorable Marsha Blackburn

1. I would like to know what lessons the Administration has taken from Tennessee's experiment with "public option" health care; a program known as TennCare.

Answer: We have learned many lessons from the TennCare experience and recognize its goals, but TennCare is not a traditional public option.

2. I would also like to know how you see the Medicare Advantage program fitting into the proposed "public option" structure.

Answer: The Medicare Advantage program provides important choice for our senior populations. The public option in health reform would be a part of the exchange, as one option alongside several private health insurance options that would be available to our non-elderly populations. Both would serve as an avenue to increase choice and improve quality and access to health care for all Americans.

3. Finally, in your testimony, you stated that the proposal before us is deficit neutral. That claim is far out of line with the estimates that I have seen. I would appreciate if you would elaborate further on the impact this plan would have on the deficit.

Answer: The President supports ensuring health reform is fully paid for. We know the House Committees are currently working toward including policies to pay for health reform, and we look forward to working together on these policies.

More recently, the President has announced incorporating productivity into payment updates; cutting waste, fraud and abuse; and other savings proposals.